

is desirable and reasonable for the City to participate in the provision of downtown parking, though its participation is not absolutely essential. Cooperation of the downtown business interests and the City in the provision of off-street parking may be organized in at least three quite different ways; by a parking token or validation scheme, through benefit assessments, and through purchase of off-street parking bonds. The first method is in many ways the most simple and direct, and yet in many cases it has not worked well. The City might build the facilities and charge parking rates large enough to pay the full cost, and accept payment either directly from the person who uses a parking space or in the form of a ticket or token which the merchants pay for and give to their customers. Parking meters are made for this purpose; they will accept either a coin or a token. The disadvantages of this system are that merchants know that most customers will visit several stores on one trip and fail to give tokens or tickets to many of their customers, assuming that they will get them somewhere else, and that the system requires either the arbitrary time limits imposed by meters or the additional expense of providing a parking attendant.

The benefit assessment method comes close to the ideal arrangement of the shopping center, and has been used with considerable success in some other states. In 1951 a state law was passed specifically providing for benefit assessments for parking (G.S. 160-504), but so far as we know no North Carolina municipality has taken advantage of it. The mechanics of this method are much the same as those under which the City may pave a street or install a sewer and assess the cost against the owners of the land which is benefitted by the improvement with provisions, in the case of the parking, for the cost to be spread over twenty years. The requirement is that there be agreement on a basis for assessment, front footage, square feet of floor area, or some other basis, and that a petition